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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
5 October 1954

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: Impending Austrian Provincial Elections

1. Date: 17 October 1954
2. Offices to be filled: Governorships and local parliaments, as well as some city and communal offices, in the provinces of Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Vienna, and Lower Austria. Provincial elections are held every four years.
3. Parties participating: Austrian People's Party (OeVP), Austrian Socialist Party (SPOe), Union of Independents (VdU), the new Freedom Rally, and the Austrian Communist Party (KPOe).
4. Key Political Figures: None.
5. Principal Issues: The only serious contenders in the campaign are the People's Party and the Socialists, national coalition partners. They have been conducting mild, orderly campaigns emphasizing coalition unity on a national level and sticking rather close to local issues and personalities. Unemployment is at its lowest point in several years and hence is not as powerful an issue as it has been in the past. There is likely to be considerable stress on rising food prices, especially in Salzburg. The right wing parties--Union of Independents and Freedom Rally--are attacking the coalition parties on local and national issues, but with little effect. The Communists likewise are having little success with their usual line on Austrian military preparations and Anschluss with West Germany.
6. Party Strengths: (As revealed in 1953 National Elections)

	Vorarlberg	Salzburg	Vienna	Lower Austria
People's Party	56%	43%	9.2	50.2%
Socialists	22.4%	35.3%	78.1	34%
Independents	19%	19%	.3	10.4%
Communists	2.8%	2.7%	11.4	5.4%
(People's opposition)				

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7. Principal factors influencing the outcome: The gradual shift of votes away from the People's Party to the Socialists during the past eight years is probably due to the fact that OeVP is strongest among the older population while younger voters turn more to the Socialists and fail to fill gaps caused by deaths in the OeVP. Communist losses are also usually absorbed by the Socialists. Anti-Communist sentiment is generally very strong and precludes any sudden or great shifts toward the KPOe or any of its political front organizations. The bad split in the right-wing forces assures their continued weakness and will probably result in their poorest showing to date.
8. Outcome of other relevant elections: In the 1949 national parliamentary elections, the 1950 provincial elections, the 1951 presidential elections, and the 1953 national elections, there has been a gradual shift in votes toward the Socialists and away from the OeVP in most of the areas concerned. Recent municipal and labor elections also indicate a rise in Socialist strength, probably at the expense of the OeVP and the Communists. The right wing VdU suffered considerably in the 1953 national elections and the subsequent split in its ranks which resulted in the formation of the Freedom Rally indicates that it will fare even worse in 1954. The KPOe and its political front organizations have shown steady losses in the past eight years.
9. Informed opinions: People's Party politicians are generally gloomy over their election prospects, while the Socialists are generally confident. OeVP candidates are expected to hold their own or suffer only slight losses to the Socialists in Vorarlberg, while the Socialists will probably make some gains at the expense of the OeVP in Salzburg. In both of these provinces, however, the OeVP is expected to maintain a comfortable lead. Although the VdU will probably not be much affected by the entrance of the Freedom Rally in Vorarlberg and Salzburg, it may lose some votes to the OeVP. The Communists in these states are expected to do poorly.

In Vienna, the Socialists are expected to make some gains, and the OeVP is said to be worried that it may lose enough votes to make it ineligible to participate in the Vienna provincial government. The VdU is expected to suffer heavily from the formation of the Freedom Rally here. The Communists, concentrated largely in the industrial sections and Soviet sector of Vienna, will likely again win over

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10 percent of the vote.

In Lower Austria, gains are predicted for the Socialists at the expense of the OeVP, and the Communist Party will probably maintain its five percent of the vote.

10. Probable significance for US security interests: The elections have negligible significance for US security interests.

[Redacted]  
Acting Assistant Director  
Current Intelligence

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